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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 001160

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SUBJECT: MISSILE DEFENSE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: THE ROAD
AHEAD

REF: A. PRAGUE 0999
1B. PRAGUE 1080
1C. PRAGUE 1009
1D. STATE 138417

Classified By: Ambassador Richard Graber for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(C) Summary and Comment: We have seen a measurable improvement in support for missile defense since our August update (Ref A). US and Czech efforts since August have started to positively influence the debate. Recent polls show that only 49% of the Czech public is now against the radar, down from 60% to 70% earlier this year. Codels, trips of journalists and Czech health experts to Kwajelin, and the Czech Government's sustained public diplomacy efforts have all made important contributions to improving public support for the radar.

2.(C) Over the summer, the likely timeline for ratification slipped to spring 2008(Ref A). Upcoming budget debates and the February 2008 Czech presidential elections make an earlier ratification vote impossible. Getting the 101 votes in Parliament to ratify the Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement (BMDA) and the Supplemental Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) will continue to require a structured, long-term public outreach effort with significant investments from high-level State Department and Department of Defense officials. Secretary Gates, visit later this month is a significant first step. We also should seek ways to showcase tangible economic benefits from hosting the radar. Action requests are in paragraphs 3, 11-13, 17, and 19. End Summary and Comment.

Successful Codels

3.(SBU) One of the major impediments identified in the summer was the perceived lack of support in Congress for missile defense. Every Congressional Committee or Sub-Committee vote to cut funding was dissected in the Czech press. The press saw each vote as a sign that Congressional support for missile defense was waning. Likewise, the Czech public became convinced that Congress was considering proceeding with the radar in the Czech Republic, but not with the interceptors in Poland. Codels led by Representative Franks and Representative Tauscher reassured Czech politicians and the public that MD does have significant bipartisan support and that the radar and the interceptors are a package deal (Refs. B and C). We request that the Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H) encourage Senators and Representatives, especially well-known foreign policy experts like Senator Lugar, to visit Prague and further reinforce Representative Franks' and Tauscher's messages.

Trips to Kwajelin

4.(SBU) The Embassy and the Czechs have countered the anti-radar campaign of half truths and rumors by sending groups of journalists and health experts to Kwajelin to see the proposed radar in operation. In early September, a group of Czech journalists visited the island. The journalists filed many positive stories, particularly on the radio, detailing daily life on the island and the radar's limited impact. In September and October, two groups of Czech health experts from the Ministry of Health and the Academy of Sciences visited Kwajelin. The independent measurements and conclusions contained in their reports supported US claims that there are no health risks from the radar and that it does not violate any Czech standards. Newspapers and television stations widely covered the report's conclusions.

Czech Government Gets its Act Together

5.(C) Over the summer, the Czech Government was losing the public debate (Ref A). 60% to 70% of Czechs were against the proposed radar facility. Since then, public opinion has started to shift. In September, STEM, the equivalent of the Gallup organization in the US, released a poll showing only 49% of Czechs were against the proposed radar system. While only 22% of those polled were in favor of hosting the facility, 50% of those against the radar said they would be open to changing their opinion if they were provided with more information. This figure is a strong indication that we have an opportunity to positively influence the debate.

6.(U) Despite a shaky start (Ref. A), the Czech Government's "MD Communications Czar" or "Mr. Radar," Tomas Klvana, helped to focus the Government's efforts on providing information to the public. Working with a local public relations firm, the Government is planning a multi-faceted information campaign.

The centerpiece of this campaign is two new websites. The first site, www.protiraketovaobrana.cz, is run in coordination with Klvana through a partially government-funded NGO. The site contains information on the radar, editorials and other opinion pieces from the Czech and international press, and outlines why hosting this radar is advantageous to the Czech Republic. The public can also submit questions for experts to answer. A second website, www.protiraketam.cz, offers similar content and will be up and running by the end of October. However, heavy use of the web will most likely only reach a younger, more pro-MD audience. To reach voters over 35 who may not be as well-informed on MD as younger internet users, officials are also preparing information brochures, DVDs, and advertisements for placement on public transport, in outdoor areas, and in free daily newspapers distributed to commuters.

7.(SBU) The Czech Government has begun to listen to regional concerns and discuss development projects for the Brdy region. On October 8th, the Czech Government Commission for the Development of the Brdy Region held its first meeting. Headed by Deputy Minister of Finance Ivan Fuksa, a former Mayor of Pribam, the Commission is charged with spending 1.2 billion Czech Koruna (\$63.1 million) on projects in the Brdy region. The Ministry of Finance will provide between 200 and 250 million Czech Koruna (\$10.3 to \$12.9 million) next year. Additional grants are expected from the European Union. Potential projects include rebuilding roads, extending highway D-5, building or refurbishing military buildings, and improving public water and electrical systems. The Commission will next meet on October 25th to review a list of potential projects. Although the Government officially says that the work of this Commission is not dependent on the MD project going forward, our hope is that, if the villages see some real economic gains from this Commission, they may soften their opposition to the proposed radar facility.

Negotiations

8.(C) The next round of negotiations on the Supplemental SOFA is set for October 30-31. November 1 is a possible third day. Our hope is that we will be able to make substantial progress

on the major outstanding issues, especially on the scope of the agreement. Given their history, any broad agreement that leaves open the possibility of hosting large numbers of US troops will be deeply unpopular among the Czech public. The next round of negotiations for the Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement will be in Prague on November 5 and 6. Initial indications from the Czechs are that we will be able to make substantial progress on this agreement. Going forward, we need to ensure that our desire to conclude the agreements quickly is matched by a quick turnaround of consolidated texts to the Czechs, especially as we seek to resolve more difficult issues like the scope of the SOFA.

Framework Agreement and Industrial Cooperation

9.(SBU) In his latest remarks to visiting Congressional and USG delegations, Prime Minister Topolanek has played up the potential for greater high-tech cooperation between our respective defense industries. To facilitate this type of cooperation, the Czech Government is keen to negotiate a Framework Agreement on Missile Defense Cooperation (FA). The proposed agreement would allow for MDA and the Czech MOD to collaborate on MD-related technologies. In early October, DFM Pojar gave us a non-paper in response to the MDA provided draft agreement. The Czechs agreed with MDA's basic framework, preamble, and scope, but are clearly looking for ways to ensure that some concrete cooperation develops. Managing Czech expectations for this agreement will be critical.

10.(SBU) In the non-paper, the Czechs outlined a number of key questions they would like answered before moving forward. These include: whether the agreement in any practical way facilitates cooperation between Czech and US companies, whether the procedures for Czech companies involved in the US Ballistic Missile Defense System will be any easier after signing the FA, and if the proposed cooperation envisioned in the agreement extends beyond missile defense. They would also like to know how the annexes will be negotiated and if we have similar agreements with other allies. EUR/NCE is currently working with interagency partners to find answers to these questions. Per ref. D, we forwarded to DFM Pojar U/S Rood's letter on the FA subsequent to receiving the Czech non-paper.

11.(SBU) The non-paper also outlined their desire to hold a seminar on industrial cooperation tied to MD technology. In

September, DFM Pojar and General Obering agreed to hold in November in Prague a so-called Missile Defense Business Event. In subsequent conversations between DFM Pojar and MDA Deputy Director for International Affairs Morgan, the time frame for this event was moved to January 2008. The Czechs are very keen on holding this event and are eagerly awaiting MDA's proposal. Our recommendation is that Ms. Morgan visit Prague in early November to review MDA's plans.

Defense Procurement

12.(C) Czech commercial interest is not limited to just the potential MD Framework Agreement. We should also find ways to increase the Department of Defense (DOD) purchases of Czech goods and services. We recommend moving forward with a Reciprocal Defense Procurement Agreement. Such an agreement promotes transparency and integrity in defense acquisitions and allows Czech and US companies to compete equally for each other's defense procurements by removing national purchase requirements and customs duties. In 2002, we were negotiating such an agreement with the Czechs. When it became clear that the Czechs had several fundamental issues, including significant corruption that would make it impossible to conclude an agreement, we suspended negotiations. To join the EU, we believe that they have made significant progress addressing many of these issues. Although it could be up to a two year process, re-opening these talks could help show the Czechs that we are seeking ways to help them gain economically from MD.

13.(SBU) We wish to highlight existing opportunities for Czech companies to do business with DOD. We recommend that an official from the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) visit Prague. Such a visit would allow for him or her to not only talk with companies interested in selling to DOD, but also to make sure that he or she sees what the Czechs have to offer. We also want to take advantage of existing training in Europe on DOD procurement policies and procedures for commercial companies. Our hope is that, with the Czech firms better knowing how to compete, DOD will purchase more Czech goods and services and demonstrate that there are real economic benefits from having a close military relationship with the US. However, managing Czech expectations for potential DOD acquisitions will be extremely important.

Embassy Outreach

14.(C) We have reinforced our own public outreach efforts. In early October, we kicked off a comprehensive outreach campaign targeting key members of the Czech Parliament, regional governors, mayors, political advisors, defense experts, and opinion leaders. Our goal is to try to influence as many people as possible through one-on-one meetings or small gatherings with the Ambassador or Embassy staff, press events, and public debates with radar opponents. Through these efforts, we hope to create an environment in Parliament where ratification is more likely. We also want to try to improve relations with the Brdy region and demonstrate that we will be a positive addition to the region.

16.(C) We expect that Defense Secretary Gates, visit late this month will be a major contribution to our outreach efforts. He will hold talks with President Klaus, the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, and the opposition leader, Jiri Paroubek. He is also scheduled to meet with 15-20 members of parliament and answer questions from the press.

The Road Ahead

17.(C) Many potential supporters from opposition parties and the Government have told us that they will not be able to vote for the SOFA or the BMDA without a clear declaration from NATO that the radar and the interceptors will eventually be part of an integrated NATO system. Everyone agrees that the system needs to be "NATO-sized," but both we and the Czechs have continued to talk abstractly about this issue. We need to engage the Czechs and other like-minded allies on our MD strategy for Bucharest. By taking a political decision at Bucharest to move forward on medium and short range missile defense, NATO will dramatically increase the chances that the Czech Parliament will approve both treaties.

High-Level Visits to Prague

18.(SBU) With spring 2008 following the NATO summit in Bucharest the likely time for ratification, we now face a longer road ahead than we first thought. We now will require a sustained in country public outreach effort that relies on a number of high-level Defense and State Department visits.

Our goal is to have at least one visitor at the DAS level or above every four to six weeks. Ref A outlines the major areas where we still need to focus our public diplomacy efforts, including: forging a consensus within NATO for comprehensive missile defense, outlining the threat to Europe from ballistic missiles, building upon the successful Tauscher and Franks' visit to dispel the myth that Congressional support for MD is in question, and outlining the economic benefits of hosting the radar.

19. (C) We realize that this list of potential visitors is very ambitious. However, regular visits from senior DOD and State Department officials culminating in a visit from Secretary Rice is the only way to win over skeptical members

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of parliament and to demonstrate to the Czechs that we value them as a major transatlantic partners. Therefore, looking

ahead, we request Washington work on the following visits:

Date: November 2007.

Visitor: General O'Reilly, Deputy Director of the Missile Defense Agency.

Purpose: Provide detailed briefings to parliamentarians on the ballistic missile threat and give interviews to local press.

Date: November 2007.

Visitor: Nancy Morgan, MDA Deputy Director for International Affairs.

Purpose: Review with the Czechs MDA's plans for a Missile Defense Business Event.

Date: November or December 2007.

Visitor: Ambassador Nuland, US Permanent Representative to NATO.

Purpose: Update parliamentarians and the public on our plans to "NATOize" the MD system.

Date: December 2007.

Visitor: EUR PDAS Kurt Volker.

Purpose: Lobby Czech officials on the threat from ballistic missiles and how the radar could be integrated into a comprehensive NATO missile defense system.

Date: January 2008.

Visitor: General Obering, Director of the Missile Defense Agency.

Purpose: Update parliamentarians on recent MDA tests; outline on a technical level how the proposed US bilateral system could complement a future NATO system.

Visit the Brdy region to tour the site and talk with local residents and officials.

Date: February or March 2008.

Visitor: Under Secretary Burns.

Purpose: Serve as a keynote speaker for a joint US-Czech-Polish conference on missile defense. Approximately 40 influential politicians, commentators, and experts would take part in this conference. Changing the minds of a few of these very influential people could win greater public and parliamentary support.

Date: March 2008.

Visitor: NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer.

Purpose: Provide well-timed, public statements indicating NATO's willingness to support MD to give political cover for members of parliament to vote for the two agreements.

Date: Spring 2008.

Visitor: The Secretary.

Purpose: Demonstrate shortly before the ratification vote the importance of MD to the Administration and underscore that the US values the Czechs as a major partner. Her visit could also win a few additional votes in Parliament.

Visits to the US

¶19. (C) We will continue to need to host Czech officials and parliamentarians at the highest possible levels. In several cases, high-level meetings in Washington have helped to increase support for MD. We request that Washington host the following Czech politicians and delegations:

Date: November 2007.

Visit: CSSD Chair and Opposition Leader Jiri Paroubek to Washington.

Purpose: Demonstrate to Paroubek that we value his opinions and actively seek his party's support for missile defense.

Date: November 2007.

Visit: Deputy Foreign Minister Tomas Pojar to Washington.

Purpose: To strategize and hear from the main Czech negotiator how he believes negotiations are going and what he sees as the prospects for Parliament ratifying both agreements.

Date: Winter 2007/2008.

Visit: Prime Minister Topolanek to Washington.

Purpose: Demonstrate that we value the Czechs' help on MD and increase his ability to keep his coalition partners in line.

Date: Winter 2007/2008.

Visit: Members of Czech Parliament to Kwajelin or California.

Purpose: Continue to help to calm the fears of many parliamentarians that the radar will be health risk or interfere with daily life in the Brdy region.

Graber